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Mr. *Chillingworth's* Judgment OF THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS, &c.

The PREFACE.

SInce the Parliament is now upon a Bill of Comprehenſion, and another of Indulgence or Toleration, I cannot but think it ſeaſonable to publiſh theſe Paſſages, which I have collected out of Mr. Chillingworth's *Book, intituled,* The Religion of Proteſtants a ſafe Way to Salvation. *Not but that I ſuppoſe there are few Lords, or Members of the Houſe of Commons, that were ſo little concern'd in the Controverſie between Papiſts and Proteſtants, as not to have read ſo famous a Book of that Subject; which in order to printing, had the high Approbation of the then Vice-Chancellor, and both the King's and* Margaret *Profeſſors of Divinity in the Univerſity of* Oxon; *and ſince its publication,*

has had the highest Commendation of most, if not all Learned Protestants, as the most learned and judicious Book of any that had been publish'd before upon those great Controverted Points; yet even to such it will not be unpleasing to be reminded of these few useful Things.

Here the Reader will find, in brief, what the Religion of Protestants is; what Errors are dangerous, what not: That differing Protestants agree in all Things necessary to Salvation; that it's Unchristian to use Force in Matters meerly Religious. What is the Fountain of all the Schisms of the Church, and the Calamities that have infested Christendom about Opinions of Religion; and that Universal Liberty, well moderated, is the way to reduce Christians to Truth and Unity.

This Book was first printed in the Year 1637, *and dedicated to his Majesty* Charles *the First, and reprinted* 1663; *and for more common use made shorter, by leaving out personal Matters, printed again* Anno 1685.

Of

Of the Religion of Proteſtants.

Chap. 6. Nom. 56. Know then, Sir, that when I ſay the Religion of Proteſtants is in prudence to be preferred before yours: as on the one ſide I do not underſtand by your Religion the Doctrine of *Bellarmine*, or *Baronius*, or any other private Man amongſt you; nor the Doctrine of the *Sorbon*, or of the Jeſuits, or of the Dominicans, or of any other particular Company amongſt you, but that wherein you all agree, or profeſs to agree, *The Doctrine of the Council of* Trent: So accordingly on the other ſide, by *The Religion of Proteſtants*, I do not underſtand the Doctrine of *Luther*, or *Calvin*, or *Melancton*, nor the Confeſſion of *Auguſta* or *Geneva*, nor the Catechiſm of *Heidelberg*, nor the Articles of the Church of *England*, no, nor the Harmony of Proteſtant Confeſſions, but that wherein they all agree, and which they all ſubſcribe with a greater Harmony, as a perfect Rule of their Faith and Actions; that is, the Bible, the Bible, I ſay the Bible only is the Religion of Proteſtants! Whatſoever elſe they believe beſides it, and the plain irrefragable, indubitable conſequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of Opinion, but not as a matter of Faith and Religion; neither can they with coherence to their own grounds believe it themſelves, nor require the belief of it of others, without moſt high and moſt ſchiſmatical Preſumption. I, for my part, after a long (and as I ve-

rily believe and hope) impartial ſearch of *the true way to eternal Happineſs*, do profeſs plainly, that I cannot find any reſt for the ſole of my foot, but upon this Rock only. I ſee plainly and with mine own eyes, that there are Popes againſt Popes, Councils againſt Councils, ſome Fathers againſt others, the ſame Fathers againſt themſelves, a Conſent of Fathers of one Age againſt a Conſent of Fathers of another Age, the Church of one Age againſt the Church of another Age; Traditive Interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there are few or none to be found: No Tradition but only of Scripture can derive it ſelf from the Fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in ſuch an Age after Chriſt, or that in ſuch an Age it was not in. In a word, there is no ſufficient certainty but of the Scripture only, for any conſidering Man to build upon. This therefore, and this only, I have reaſon to believe; this I will profeſs, according to this I will live, and for this, if there be occaſion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly loſe my Life, though I ſhould be ſorry that Chriſtians ſhould take it from me. Propoſe me any thing out of this Book, and require whether I believe it or no, and ſeem it never ſo incomprehenſible to Humane Reaſon, I will ſubſcribe it with Hand and Heart, as knowing no demonſtration can be ſtronger than this, *God hath ſaid ſo, therefore it is true.* In other things I will take no Man's Liberty of Judgment from him, neither ſhall any Man take mine from me; I will think no Man the worſe Man or the worſe Chriſtian; I will love no Man the leſs for differing in Opinion from me; and what meaſure I meet to others, I expect from them again: I am fully aſſured that God does not, and therefore that Men ought

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not to require any more of any Man than this, To believe the Scripture to be God's Word, to endeavour to find the true ſence of it, and to live according to it.

N. 57. This is the Religion which I have choſen, after a long deliberation, and I am verily perſwaded that I have choſen wiſely, much more wiſely than if I had guided my ſelf according to your Churches Authority; for the Scripture being all true, I am ſecured by believing nothing elſe, that I ſhall believe no falſhood as Matter of Faith: And if I miſtake the ſenſe of Scripture, and ſo fall into Error, yet I am ſecure from any danger thereby, if but your Grounds be true; becauſe endeavouring to find the true Senſe of Scripture, I cannot but hold my Error without pertinacy, and be ready to forſake it, when a more true and a more probable ſenſe ſhall appear unto me: And then all neceſſary Truth being, as I have proved, plainly ſet down in Scripture, I am certain by believing Scripture, to believe all neceſſary Truth; and he that does ſo, if his Life be anſwerable to his Faith, how is it poſſible he ſhould fail of Salvation?

Scripture the only Rule whereby to judg of Controverſies.

Chap. 2. *N.* 11.—To ſpeak properly (as Men ſhould ſpeak when they write of Controverſies in Religion) the Scripture is not a Judg of Controverſies, but a *Rule only*, and *the only Rule for Chriſtians to judg them by:* Every Man is to judg for himſelf with the Judgment of Diſcretion, and to chuſe either his Religion firſt, and then his Church, as we ſay; or as you, his Church firſt, and then his Religion. But by the Conſent of both ſides, every Man is to judg and chuſe; and the Rule whereby he is to direct his choice, if he be a natural Man, is Reaſon; if he be already a Chriſtian, Scripture,

Scripture, which we ſay is the Rule to judg all Controverſies by, yet not all ſimply, but all the Controverſies of Chriſtians, of thoſe that are already agreed upon this firſt Principle, that *the Scripture is the Word of God.* But that there is any Man, or any Company of Men, appointed to be Judg for all Men, that we deny; and that I believe you will never prove.

Every Man to judg for himſelf in Matters of Religion.

Chap. 2. *N.* 16. In Civil and Criminal Cauſes, the Parties have for the moſt part ſo much Intereſt, and very often ſo little Honeſty, that they will not ſubmit to a Law though never ſo plain, if it be againſt them; or will not ſee it to be againſt them, though it be never ſo plainly: Whereas if Men were honeſt, and the Law were plain and extended to all Caſes, there would be little need of Judges. Now in Matters of Religion, when the Queſtion is, Whether every Man be a fit Judg and Chuſer for himſelf? we ſuppoſe Men honeſt, and ſuch as underſtand the difference between a Moment and Eternity; and ſuch Men, we conceive, will think it highly concerns them to be of the true Religion, but nothing at all that this or that Religion ſhould be the true: And then we ſuppoſe that all the neceſſary Points of Religion are plain and eaſie, and conſequently every Man in this Cauſe to be a competent Judg for himſelf, becauſe it concerns himſelf to judg right as much as Eternal Happineſs is worth, and if through his own default he judg amiſs, he alone ſhall ſuffer for it.

Ch. 3. *N.* 81. —— If they [Men] would be themſelves, and be content that others ſhould be, in the choice of their Religion, the Servants of God and not of Men; if they would allow, that the

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way to Heaven is no narrower now than Christ left it, his Yoak no heavier than he made it; that the belief of no more Difficulties is required now to Salvation, than was in the Primitive Church; that no Error is in it self destructive and exclusive from Salvation now, which was not then; if instead of being zealous Papists, earnest Calvinists, rigid Lutherans, they would become themselves, and be content that others should be plain and honest Christians; if all Men would believe the Scripture, and freeing themselves from Prejudice and Passion, would sincerely endeavour to find the true sence of it, and live according to it, and require no more of others but to do so, not denying their Communion to any that do so, would so order their Publick Service of God, that all which do so may without Scruple or Hypocrisie, or Protestation against any part of it, joyn with them in it; who does not see that (seeing as we suppose here, and shall prove hereafter) all necessary Truths are plainly and evidently set down in Scripture, there would of necessity be among all Men, in all things necessary, Unity of Opinion? And notwithstanding any other differences that are or could be, Unity of Communion, and Charity, and mutual Toleration; by which means all Schism and Heresie would be banished the World, and those wretched Contentions which now rend and tear in pieces not the Coat, but the Members and Bowels of Christ, with mutual Pride and Tyranny, and cursing, killing, and damning, would fain make immortal, should speedily receive a most blessed Catastrophe. But of this hereafter, when we shall come to the Question of Schism, wherein I perswade my self that I shall plainly shew, that the most vehement Accusers are the greatest

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Offenders, and that they are indeed at this time the greateſt Schiſmaticks, who make the way to Heaven narrower, the Yoke of Chriſt heavier, the differences of Faith greater, the Conditions of Eccleſiaſtical Government harder and ſtricter, than they were made at the beginning by Chriſt and his Apoſtles; they who talk of Unity and aim at Tyranny, and will have Peace with none but with their Slaves and Vaſſals.

Pref. N. 30. —— For what one Concluſion is there in the whole Fabrick of my Diſcourſe, that is not naturally deducible out of this one Principle, *That all things neceſſary to Salvation are evidently contained in the Scriptures?* Or what one Concluſion almoſt of importance is there in your Book, which is not by this one clearly confutable? Grant this, and it will preſently follow, in oppoſition to your firſt Concluſion, and the Argument of your firſt Chapter, That amongſt Men of different Opinions, touching the obſcure and controverted Queſtions of Religion, ſuch as may with probability be diſputed on both ſides, (and ſuch are the Diſputes of Proteſtants) good Men and Lovers of Truth of all ſides may be ſaved, becauſe all neceſſary things being ſuppoſed evident concerning them, with Men ſo qualified, there will be no difference; there being no more certain ſign that a Point is not evident, than that honeſt and underſtanding and indifferent Men, and ſuch as give themſelves liberty of Judgment, after a mature Conſideration of the matter, differ about it.

Of Diſagreeing Proteſtants.

Anſ. to *Pref. N.* 26. 1. The moſt diſagreeing Proteſtants that are, yet thus far agree, that theſe Books of

of Scripture which were never doubted of in the Church, are the undoubted Word of God, and a perfect Rule of Faith. 2. That the ſenſe of them which God intended, whatſoever it is, is certainly true; ſo that they believe implicitly even thoſe very Truths againſt which they err; and why an implicit Faith in Chriſt and his Word, ſhould not ſuffice as well as an implicit Faith in your Church, I have deſired to be reſolved by many of your ſide, but never could. 3. That they are to uſe their beſt Endeavours to believe the Scripture in true ſenſe, and to live according to it. This, if they perform (as I hope many on all ſides do) truly and ſincerely, it is impoſſible but that they ſhould believe aright in all things neceſſary to Salvation, that is, in all thoſe things that pertain to the Covenant between God and Man in Chriſt; for ſo much is not only plainly but frequently contained in Scripture and believing aright the Covenant, if they for their parts perform the Condition required of them, which is ſincere Obedience, why ſhould they not expect that God will perform his Promiſe, and give them Salvation? For, as for other things which lie without the Covenant, and are therefore leſs neceſſary, if by reaſon of the ſeeming Conflict which is oftentimes between Scripture, Reaſon, and Authority on the one ſide, and Scripture, Reaſon, and Authority on the other; if by reaſon of the variety of Tempers, Abilities, Educations, and unavoidable Prejudices, whereby Mens Underſtandings are variouſly formed and faſhioned, they do embrace ſeveral Opinions, whereof ſome muſt be erroneous; to ſay that God will damn them for ſuch Errors, who are Lovers of him, and Lovers of Truth, is to rob Man of his Comfort, and God of his

Goodneſs, it is to make Man deſperate, and God a Tyrant.

Ib. N. 27. That it is ſufficient for any Man's Salvation, that he believe the Scripture, that he endeavour to believe it in the true ſenſe of it as far as concerns his Duty; and that he conform his Life unto it, either by Obedience or Repentance: He that does ſo, (and all Proteſtants, according to the *Diſtamen* of their Religion, ſhould do ſo) may be ſecured that he cannot err Fundamentally, ſo that notwithſtanding their Differences, and your Preſumption, *the ſame Heaven may receive them all.*

Ib. N. 29. Who can find fault with him [Dr. *Potter*] for ſaying; If through want of means of Inſtruction, Incapacity, invincible or probable Ignorance, a Man die in Error, he may be ſaved: But if he be negligent in ſeeking Truth, unwilling to find it, either doth ſee it and will not, or might ſee it and will not, that his Caſe is dangerous, and without Repentance, deſperate.

Ch. 1. *N.* 11. Methinks, with much more Reaſon, and much more Charity, you muſt ſuppoſe that many of theſe Controverſies which are now diſputed among Chriſtians, (all which profeſs themſelves Lovers of Chriſt, and truly deſirous to know his Will and do it) are either *not decidable* by that means which God hath provided, and ſo not neceſſary to be decided; or if they be, yet *not ſo plainly and evidently*, as to oblige Men to hold one way: Or laſtly, if decidable, and evidently decided, yet you may hope that the erring part, by reaſon of ſome Veil before their Eyes, *ſome excuſable Ignorance, or unavoidable Prejudice*, does not ſee the Queſtion to be decided againſt him, and ſo oppoſes not that which he doth know to be the Word of God, but only that which you know to be ſo, and which he might know,

know, were he void of Prejudice: which is a Fault, I confeſs, but a Fault which is incident even to good and honeſt Men very often; and not of ſuch a Gigantick Diſpoſition as you make it, to fly directly upon God Almighty, and to give him the Lie to his Face.

Of the Neceſſity of a Viſible Judg in Controverſies of Religion, as well as in Civil Matters.

Ch. 2. *N.* 17.——In Civil Controverſies we are obliged only to external Paſſive Obedience, and not to an Internal and Active. We are bound to obey the Sentence of the Judg, or not to reſiſt it, but not always to believe it juſt. But in Matters of Religion, ſuch a Judg is required whom we ſhould be obliged to believe to have judged right; ſo that in Civil Controverſies every honeſt and underſtanding Man is fit to be a Judg, but in Religion none but he that is infallible.

5. In Civil Cauſes there is Means and Power, when the Judg has decreed to compel Men to obey his Sentence: otherwiſe I believe Laws alone would be to as much purpoſe for the ending of Differences, as Laws and Judges both. But all the Power in the World is neither fit to convince, nor able to compel a Man's Conſcience to conſent to any thing: Worldly Terror may prevail ſo far, as to make Men profeſs a Religion which they believe not, (ſuch Men, I mean, who know not that there is a Heaven provided for Martyrs, and a Hell for thoſe that diſſemble ſuch Truths as are neceſſary to be profeſſed) but to force either any Man to believe what he believes not, or any honeſt Man to diſſemble what he does believe, (if God commands him to profeſs it) or to profeſs what he does not believe, all the Powers in the World are too weak, with all the Powers of Hell to aſſiſt them.

7. In Civil Matters it is impossible *Titius* should hold the Land in question, and *Sempronius* too; and therefore either the Plaintiff must injure the Defendant by disquieting his Possession, or the Defendant wrong the Plaintiff, by keeping his Right from him. But in Controversies of Religion the Case is otherwise; I may hold my Opinion, and do you no wrong, and you yours, and do me none. Nay, we may both of us hold our Opinion, and yet do our selves no harm, provided the Difference be not touching any thing necessary to Salvation, and that we love Truth so well, as to be diligent to inform our Conscience, and constant in following it.

Concerning Errors Damnable, or not Damnable.

Ch. 3. *N.* 52. I Answer, that these Differences between Protestants concerning Errors Damnable, and not Damnable: Truths Fundamental, and not Fundamental, may be easily reconciled; for either the Error they speak of, may be *purely and simply involuntary*, or it may be, in respect of *the cause of it, voluntary*: If the Cause of it be some voluntary and unavoidable Fault, the Error is it self sinful, and consequently in its own Nature damnable; as if by negligence in seeking the Truth, by unwillingness to find it, by Pride, by Obstinacy, by desiring that Religion should be true which suits best with my Ends, by fear of Mens ill Opinion, or any other worldly Fear, or any worldly Hope, I betray my self to any Error contrary to any Divine revealed Truth, that Error may be justly stiled a Sin, and consequently of it self to such an one damnable; but if I be guilty of none of these Faults, but be desirous to know the Truth, and diligent in seeking it, and advise not at all with Flesh and

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Blood about the choice of my Opinions, but only with God, and that Reaſon that he hath given me: If I be thus qualified, and yet through humane Infirmity fall into Error, that Error cannot be damnable. Again, the Party erring, may be conceived either to die with Contrition, for all his Sins known and unknown, or without it: If he die without it, this Error in it ſelf if damnable, will be likewiſe ſo unto him; if he die with Contrition, (as his Error can be no Impediment but he may) his Error, though in it ſelf damnable to him, according to your Doctrine, will not prove ſo.

Of uſing Force in Matters of Religion.

Ch. 5. N. 96. But they *endeavoured to force the Society, whereof they were parts, to be healed and reformed as they were; and if it refuſed, they did, when they had Power, drive them away, even their Superiors, both Spiritual and Temporal, as is notorious.* The Proofs hereof are wanting, and therefore I might defer my Anſwer until they were produced, yet take this before-hand: If they did ſo, then herein, in my Opinion, they did amiſs; for I have learnt, from the Ancient Fathers of the Church, that *Nothing is more againſt Religion, than to force Religion*; and of St. *Paul*, *The Weapons of the Chriſtian Warfare are not Carnal*: And great Reaſon; For humane Violence may make Men counterfeit, but cannot make them believe, and is therefore fit for nothing, but to breed Form without, and Atheiſm within. Beſides, if this means of bringing Men to embrace any Religion were generally uſed, (as if it may be juſtly uſed in any place, by thoſe that have Power, and think they have Truth, certainly they cannot with reaſon deny, but that it may be uſed in

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every place, by thoſe that have Power as well as they, and think they have Truth as well as they) what could follow but the maintenance perhaps of Truth, but perhaps only of the profeſſion of it in one place, and the oppreſſion of it in an hundred? what will follow from it, but the preſervation perhaps of Unity, but peradventure only of Uniformity in particular States and Churches; but the immortalizing the greater and more lamentable Diviſions of Chriſtendom and the World? And therefore what can follow from it, but perhaps in the judgment of carnal Policy, the temporal Benefit and Tranquillity of Temporal States and Kingdoms, but the infinite Prejudice, if not the diſſolution of the Kingdom of Chriſt? And therefore it well becomes them who have their Portion in this Life, who ſerve no higher State than that of *England*, or *Spain*, or *France*, nor this neither, any further than they may ſerve themſelves by it; who think of no other happineſs but the preſervation of their own Fortunes and Tranquillity in this World; who think of no other means to preſerve States but humane Power and Machiavilian Policy, and believe no other Creed but this, *Regi aut Civitati Imperium habenti nihil anjuſtum quod utile!* Such Men as theſe it may become to maintain by worldly Power and Violence, their State, Inſtrument, Religion: For if all be vain and falſe (as in their Judgment it is) the preſent whatſoever is better than any, becauſe it is already ſetled: An alteration of it may draw with it change of States, and the change of State the ſubverſion of their Fortune; but they that are indeed Servants and Lovers of Chriſt, of Truth, of the Church, and of Mankind, ought, with all courage, to oppoſe themſelves againſt it as a common Enemy of all theſe.

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They that know there is a King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, by whose Will and Pleasure Kings and Kingdoms stand and fall; they know that to no King or State any thing can be profitable which is unjust, and that nothing can be more evidently unjust, than to force weak Men by the Profession of a Religion which they believe not, to lose their own Eternal Happiness, out of a vain and needless fear, lest they may possibly disturb their temporal Quietness, there being no danger to any State from any Mans Opinion, unless it be such an Opinion by which Disobedience to Authority or Impiety is taught or licensed; which sort I confess may justly be punished as well as other Faults; or unless this sanguinary Doctrine be joyned with it, That it is lawful for him by human Violence to enforce others to it.

Chap. 4. *N.* 16. This presumptuous imposing of the Senses of Men upon the Words of God, the special Senses of Men upon the general Words of God, and laying them upon Mens Consciences together under the equal Penalty of Death and Damnation. This vain Conceit, that we can speak of the things of God better than the words of God; this deifying our own Interpretations, and tyrannous enforcing them upon others; this restraining of the Word of God, from that Latitude and Generality, and the Understandings of Men from that Liberty wherein Christ and the Apostles left them, * is, and hath been the only Fountain of all the Schisms of the Church, and that which makes them immortal: The common Incendiary of *Christendom*, and that which (as I said before) tears

* *This Perswasion is no Singularity of mine, but the Doctrine which I have learned from Divines of great Learning and Judgment. Let the Reader be pleased to peruse the seventh Book of* Acont. de Strat. Satanæ, *and* Zanch. *his last Oration delivered by him after the composing of the Discord between him and* Amervachius, *and he shall confess as much.*

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in pieces not the Coat, but the Bowels and Members of Christ; *Ridente Turca, nec dolente Judæo*, take away these Walls of Separation, and all will quickly be one. Take away this *Persecuting, Burning, Cursing, Damning of Men* for not subscribing to the *words of Men*, as the words of God; require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no Man Master but him only; let those leave claiming Infallibility, that have no Title to it; and let them that in their Words disclaim it, disclaim it likewise in their Actions. In a word, take away Tyranny, which is the Devils Instrument to support Errors, and Superstitions, and Impieties, in the several parts of the World, which could not otherwise long withstand the Power of Truth.

I say, take away Tyranny, and restore Christians to their just and full Liberty of captivating their Understanding to Scripture only: and as Rivers, when they have a free Passage, run all to the Ocean; so it may well be hoped by God's Blessing, that universal Liberty thus moderated, may quickly reduce *Christendom* to Truth and Unity. These Thoughts of Peace (I am perswaded) may come from the God of Peace, and to his Blessing I recommend them.

FINIS.

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